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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "junI2009" (2009). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 559.
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Bard

LET ME TRY TO SAY IT AGAIN.

Bewilderment shaped like a rose

whose scent lingers on my hands
though I never touched it

eyes smart from too clear
sight of sunrise over St.George
never enough sleep never enough waking

Of course language is other people
suddenly you thought was yours

you start to talk when someone hears

Space cures most irrelevance
an animal does not distinguish
himself from his territory

what is mine?

I live in distance

A word on a page
too bright to look at

A conversation begins in a doorway
is a doorway. Begun on a boat
is a boat. A word
is more thingly than the thing it names.

I am realer than me.

Of course a door a conversation
bitter jealousy of those who have no door

no midnight

who did not stay up all night talking with

These things take longer to say.

A building in the new neighborhood
has a new tenant. Who is the name
does your remembering,
no name needed,
the mind
is that tree outside, the shadow it throws down
to meet the sun, it rose
while you were talking,
that's name enough for us,
dawn and its long, long shadow

Every war no matter how far
away it is fought is a Civil War
sets father against son, drowns
the new-born in a cry of blood
I too have seen terrible things
but I am not entitled to remember.

There was a town sick with entitlement.
It was a car, it passed on the wrong side,
nobody specially died, bided no light.
But when am I that I can be asking?

And another town, the snow melted
in a great circle round the crematorium

Suppose it could answer?
Would each ash among all the ashes
have her own explanation?

They did this. We did this.
How to be
and not be this we—
that is the only question.

Suicide is not a peacetime solution.

But isn't the war always?
Has there ever been a day
when someone in the family wasn't sick?

“ . . . when the whole world was at peace”
is how the Martyrology locates in time the birth of Jesus
toto Orbe in pace composito

it makes you wonder if Christ
was ever born

or is he waiting there
alive in the absolute identity
“the whole World was settled at peace”?

something more substantial than a song
but quicker, like a stranger’s touch

it happens to everyone why not me

randomly, as a crumb falls
from a sparrow’s beak
and no one but the sparrow grieves

or the smell of rain.

But why is Liberty on the barricades only
half-naked? What is Liberty
keeping hidden down there,
how deep the body is,
how deep and filled with such ancient
information, and why does she hide?

Men are led more readily by rumored secrets
than by spoken words,

Lenin, that телец bellwether, led them by *telos*, the goal held up before
them, the radiant image of paradise reflected off blood spilt right now

and things fall.

Am I left where the self would be?

Skin always wants somewhere else.

Well-grieved, not greaved, is how
Achilles was. Sorrow was a sword,
a kid's resentment, a foiled entitlement.

To say the 'wrath of Achilles'
led to the deeds of war, as Homer did,
is to assert that each person
has something to do with what happens

the glorious myth
of moral responsibility.

A harness'd race, we vie in fetters.

Don't hurt is all it ever says,
don't hurt me, I am all you have.

And the rose is the one who won't listen.

Did he follow you up the stairs? A man climbing behind a woman is
climbing into her body. If the staircase is long enough, he may never leave.

I am inside you without ever having passed through the gates.
Doorways mingling.

We lust commodity.
and flee propinquity.

And I also was a flower
something trashy and too much,
an orchid pressed against your breast

corsage: a flower on the body growing

we wear our bodies for the other's eye

Don't argue, touch.

Don't answer, touch

Don't even touch, touch.

Or was this home, the other place,
trees walking up to the doorway
their branches sudden snug around your hips

feelings led me up these steps
when I got to the top of the stairs
I left my feelings on the landing,
let the cat eat them,

the cat cares.

Where I am is wherever it is to be
that being is, and it alone

is all that matters,
and I don't even know what I just said,

we talked till dawn
so many words
and all of them meant something else.

26 June 2009